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**TRANSCRIPT**

**FOR** PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF **STATION** WETA TV  
PBS Network

**PROGRAM** The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour **CITY** Washington, D. C.

**DATE** February 14, 1995 7:00 PM **AUDIENCE**

**SUBJECT** Future of U. S. Intelligence: Part Two

**BROADCAST EXCERPT**

ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH: Next tonight, the second in our conversations on the future of U.S. intelligence now that the Cold War is over. Tonight we talk with Richard Helms, who served as Director of Central Intelligence from 1966 to 1973. He later served as Ambassador to Iran. He joined the CIA's predecessor agency during World War II after working as a reporter in prewar Europe.

Thank you for being with us.

RICHARD HELMS: Delighted to be here.

FARNSWORTH: Last night on the program Senator Moynihan, Senator Patrick Moynihan said that we no longer have a need for the CIA, that the Cold War's over and we no longer need it. In your view, what is the role of the CIA now?

HELMS: Well, I don't have any desire to spar with Senator Moynihan. But let me just say, to start with, that the Central Intelligence Agency was created by Congress in 1947 to avoid another Pearl Harbor. It was not mandated as a Cold War agency and it was in business before the Cold War really got under way. So that is a myth that has sort of grown up.

In the second place, the Central Intelligence Agency, if you ask a man on the street, he immediately says it's a spy organization. But that wasn't what it was set up to do in the first place.

Every day in this government -- today, for example -- between 35,000 and 40,000 individual items of information come flowing in, from the highest classifications to stuff right off the ticker. Now, someone, someplace has to look at all that and look for the

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needle in the haystack, the one important piece of information on that day which would be of use to the President or to the government. And that goes on day after day after day.

Now, that is the basic mission of the CIA. Certainly it has an espionage arm, but that's a special directorate. It also has a science and technology arm.

On this latter, I'll simply leave it to say that it works with the Pentagon to from the National Reconnaissance Organization, which does overhead reconnaissance and which is by all odds the most expensive part of the whole intelligence community budget.

FARNSWORTH: Well, should all these arms continue? You mentioned the fact that it has an intelligence-gathering function, it has a special operations, the clandestine function. Are they all important in these years now that the Cold War is over? Even understanding that it may not have started as a Cold War organization, it has certainly for most of its life been a Cold War organization. It's been aimed at fighting the Cold War.

HELMS: The big growth in intelligence was overhead reconnaissance, in expense and in size.

Now let's get back to today.

I am very much in favor of this commission, which was mandated by Congress, which is now going to look into the entire intelligence community and help to decide, help the President and the Congress to decide what downsizing should take place in the community, where less money should be spent, what the requirements are for the various agencies, and who's going to do what. This is going to be a very difficult task for them.

But on the other hand, this is not a world that's at peace. I mean this idea that the Cold War is over has sort of become a mantra, that everything can be changed because the Cold War is over. But there are still out there weapons of...

FARNSWORTH: What problems do you see, specifically, that the CIA needs to deal with now?

HELMS: Well, in the espionage field, the ones it needs to deal with are weapons of mass destruction. After all, somebody that's going to try and develop a nuclear bomb isn't going to tell the world about it. Chemical warfare. Biological warfare. There are all kinds of terrorist organizations. There are ethnic wars all over the globe going on right now that sooner or later may impinge on our national security.

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There's a great debate going on in the United States as to what the U.S. role should be in the world today and whether we should get into these humanitarian efforts, peacekeeping efforts and all the rest of these things. So that is all part of this.

But one of the most interesting things about the critics of intelligence is that they never stop to realize that once the CIA, for example, says to every agency of government, "Now, what is it you want to know today?" they get laundry lists of items and nobody wants to leave off anything that might be of even remote interest to him. So it's very hard to discipline the government in this respect. There are all kinds of pundits out there who are prepared to tell us, but not very many people in the government.

So I think this commission not only has its work cut out for us, but I think the American people can feel comfortable that real scrutiny is going to take place now.

And I don't -- before I leave this I just want to say that there are thousands of warheads still loose, nuclear warheads still loose in the Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and so forth. They're being destroyed, we think, little by little. But until it can be demonstrated that no great bomb is going to be shot off, come across the Atlantic Ocean and land on some city in the United States, I think we've got to have our feelers out.

And espionage is small business. It doesn't produce much intelligence, but it's designed to produce crucial kinds of intelligence, people's intentions, which you can't find from taking photographs, things of this sort.

So, there is a role to be played. And the question now is how to define that role.

FARNSWORTH: What would be the problem with doing what Senator Moynihan has called for, putting the clandestine part of the CIA under the Department of Defense and the intelligence-gathering part under the Department of State? Why would that not work, in your view?

HELMS: Well, in my view, the United States Government, the President of the United States and the American public has the right to have one organization which is trying to analyze all this material in an impartial and an independent way. This is the only organization that does it, the CIA. It's the President's organization. It was given to him by the Congress. And the whole point here is that the State Department has its own agendas, the Defense Department has its own agendas. They have been accused of parochialism in the past, of interest only to themselves. And I would just like to point out that I think that this is a very

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cheap item in the United States Government's budget, and the President deserves to have that kind of independent judgment.

And I know all the criticisms. People claim it's been politicized, that this, that and the other thing. That's going to be very hard to prove. And as these documents come out over time and the information is all laid out, one is going to find that the agency has done a far better job than it's given credit for.

FARNSWORTH: On secrecy, for a minute. Another thing Senator Moynihan has argued is that the reason -- he argues that one reason there have been failures recently, the failure to predict the demise of the USSR, for example, or the failure to predict that there would be an invasion of Kuwait, come about precisely because of secrecy: that when you have a secret intelligence estimate, there aren't corrections, that the mistakes are compounded.

What do you think about that? I mean he argues that secrecy is bad for intelligence.

HELMS: I just don't happen to agree with it. And I don't know how in the world you're going to do away with secrecy in the espionage business. And I don't mean to be crude here, but the two oldest jobs in the world are prostitution and espionage, and both of them have certain techniques and they haven't changed for thousands of years.

FARNSWORTH: What about...

HELMS: And secrecy is one of the ones for the second one.

FARNSWORTH: What about the argument that secrecy has no place in a democratic society?

HELMS: That's an argument which can be made if the world was at peace. I think it's a very dangerous argument in the modern day.

FARNSWORTH: What do you think of the nomination of retired Air Force General Michael Carns for the job at CIA? I know you followed, as Director, a military officer. What do you think of him as a Director?

HELMS: Well, I have no objection. I don't just happen to know General Carns, and I hope he'll be an excellent Director. There's no reason why he shouldn't be.

FARNSWORTH: Uh-huh.

And do you think that the threats to the United States now

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that you see, that the CIA is necessary to deal with some of these threats, that it can't be done by any other kind of -- can't be done by the State Department or the Pentagon, for example?

HELMS: I read in the paper this morning that...

FARNSWORTH: Take some of them for example. I mean take the nuclear threat, North Korea. Why can't that be done by the DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency?

HELMS: Because I think that the one of the things in North Korea that they're terribly anxious to have is some espionage function there, where they have secret agents who actually can establish what is happening in the nuclear program of North Korea. And this is the kind of thing that CIA should concentrate on. I'm all in favor of it. These are the hard targets, as they're called.

I remember at the time that I was in the agency and we were having so much trouble getting agents in the Soviet Union. I remember saying one day, or on several occasions, "This may be tough. What is it going to be like if the Soviet Union should ever break up?" And the last thing I expected in my lifetime was to have the nationalities question of the Soviet Union suddenly thrown open by the organization of all these nation-states.

FARNSWORTH: Why do you think that wasn't foreseen by the CIA? What do you think happened?

HELMS: It was foreseen.

Senator Moynihan and I have been through this and he regards this as a wake-up call. And I'm not going to spar with him and argue with him. He's entitled to his view and I'm entitled to mine. But I think when you see the record, eventually, you will find that there was plenty of predictions about what was going to happen.

But one thing I want to say right now. It is too much to expect any organization in government or any private organization to always be right in their predictions. As Yogi Berra once said, predictions are very difficult to make, especially about the future. And intelligence officers do their best but they do make mistakes. And if I would call to your attention how many people got right the last election in the United States, where we have no secrecy, I rest my case.

FARNSWORTH: We have only a few seconds left.

What changes would you make? If you're called before the congressional commission to suggest changes, what would you make?

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Just briefly.

HELMS: Well, my thoughts would be that there's considerable downsizing, is the first thing that I would suggest. I think that the CIA itself has become much too much of a bureaucracy. I think there needs to be less people and a little more highly concentrated and highly focused operation.

FARNSWORTH: Okay. Thank you so much for being with us.